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**D.A. BROWN BRIEFS ELECTED OFFICIALS AT ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST**

*Reports That Queens County Is At Historic Low for Murders and Auto Theft  
Urges Full Restoration of Funding to Maintain Crime-Fighting Gains*

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown today briefed City, State and Federal elected officials from Queens – including New York City Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum and Borough President Helen M. Marshall – at the District Attorney’s annual legislative breakfast held at his Kew Gardens offices.

The District Attorney proudly announced that homicides, which were at a high of 361 in 1991, were down to just 84 last year – the lowest number of homicides in forty years and a 10.6 percent decrease from 2005. Queens County is the only borough to note a decrease in homicides last year.

Major crimes – such as violent crimes and burglaries, grand larcenies and auto theft – also declined in Queens during 2006, dropping 3.8 percent over the previous year. Overall, the major crime categories have seen a reduction of 26 percent over the past five years and 74 percent since 1993.

District Attorney Brown said, “Auto theft has long been a benchmark in measuring our effectiveness in combating crime. In 1991, when I first took office, there were some 52,000 cars stolen in Queens County. Last year, we were less than 5,000 – that’s a decrease of 10.3 percent for the year and more than 90 percent since the early 1990s.”

The District Attorney added that while serious crime continued to drop dramatically across the County the total number of prosecutions – which includes non-violent and quality of life offenses – increased in 2006 – up 8.6 percent from 2005. “For the first time in Queens County history, criminal prosecutions last year exceeded the 70,000 mark,” District Attorney Brown said. “Nevertheless, Queens continues to lead the City in the quality of its prosecutions. For example, while felony arrests in Queens County made up 18.5 percent of the citywide total, Queens was responsible for 21.9 percent of the City’s felony convictions. This disproportionate arrest and conviction pattern was even more noticeable when compared to violent felony arrests. For such cases, while Queens County handled a fifth of all citywide arrests, it was responsible for nearly a quarter of the City’s convictions and prison sentences.”

The District Attorney urged lawmakers to support his efforts to fully restore budget cuts imposed over the last five years of almost 20 percent, noting that the budget cuts had forced him to substantially reduce costs by reducing staff through attrition, a hiring freeze and by increasing the caseloads of assistant district attorneys assigned to the Supreme and Criminal Courts. “This year, as the City and State’s fiscal outlook has improved and revenue has begun to increase, it is time to restore those funds,” he said, “so that we may fulfill our constitutional and statutory responsibilities and develop new initiatives to enhance public safety and improve the quality of life of the residents of Queens County.”

One such initiative, the District Attorney said, would be an expansion of ongoing programs targeting youth violence and gang activity. “While overall crime is down, the rate of reduction for violent crimes has slowed significantly,” said District Attorney Brown. “And there has been a troubling resurgence of gun violence. Shootings in the county last year were up more than 14 percent. And much of this violence is related to gangs. Organized gang activity related to gun and drug trafficking has fueled turf rivalries and set off waves of retaliatory violence. Additional resources will enable us to address gang violence more proactively.”

District Attorney Brown added, “Gun violence and active gang recruitment continue to pose serious challenges to young people. In response, I want to build up our youth violence intervention and prevention initiatives. As many of you know, our office has made a long term commitment to working with at-risk youth in Far Rockaway. Through programs like STAR TRACK, Operation Summer Fun and our Summer

(more)

Youth Employment Program, we offer educational and recreational alternatives to violence and we have created strong and productive relationships with local school and law enforcement officials and community groups – not just in the Rockaways, but in other parts of our county, as well. We are eager to expand some of these programs and to launch additional programs focused on mentoring, gang awareness training and community outreach, among other things.”

District Attorney Brown also urged the legislators to help him obtain additional funds to investigate and prosecute hate crimes. “We have taken a strong stand against this conduct and have aggressively – and successfully – prosecuted those who engaged in such behavior under our State’s enhanced hate crime laws,” said the District Attorney. “In prior years, City funding was provided to help support and enhance the prosecution of hate crimes, but that funding was eliminated several years ago.”

Another area in which more funding is needed, according to the District Attorney, is child abuse. In 2006, there were more than 12,300 cases of child abuse, maltreatment and neglect reported to the State Central Registry in Albany from Queens County – a significant increase over 2005. Approximately 3,550 of those cases were referred to the Queens District Attorney’s Office to investigate for possible criminality – up from 2,200 the year before. “We very much need funding for a dedicated child abuse protection unit staffed by specially trained assistants and support personnel committed to the investigation and prosecution of cases involving the physical and sexual abuse of children,” said District Attorney Brown.

Another area of concern for the District Attorney’s Office is domestic violence. “Our Domestic Violence Bureau has the highest conviction rate in the City; it has the lowest dismissal rate; and it takes more pre-indictment felony pleas than the rest of the City combined,” said District Attorney Brown. “As many of you know, for some time now we have been receiving Federal Violence Against Women Act funding which has been supporting our Domestic Violence Bureau and the incredible work that they do. The Federal Government has characterized our program as a model for prosecutors across the country to emulate – and it has extended our funding for an unprecedented ten year period. But that period is fast drawing to a close and we will have to look elsewhere to replace that funding. We would ask those of you in the State Legislature and the City Council to help us ensure that we can continue to protect battered women and aggressively prosecute their abusers.”

Other anti-crime initiatives called for by District Attorney Brown include the establishment of an Identity Theft and Financial Crimes Unit, and funding to pay for the costs of expert testimony in DNA cases. “Forensic analysis has greatly enhanced our ability to solve crimes – not only in the area of homicides and sexual assaults but increasingly in other areas as well – such as through the Queens Biotracks program which helps us to solve and prosecute burglaries with DNA,” said the District Attorney. “DNA technology has increased our reliance on lab technicians and other expert witnesses to testify at trial about their testing procedures and the significance of their results. In order to maximize our ability to investigate and prosecute crimes swiftly and accurately, we need funding to pay for the costs of this expert testimony.”

District Attorney Brown additionally noted that his office’s felony conviction rate remains the best citywide – 94.6 percent – and that its dismissal rate of felony complaints and indictments was the lowest. “Despite budget cuts, our prosecutors are continuing to make major cases against drug traffickers, organized crime mobsters and criminals involved in auto theft, auto insurance fraud, crime at our airports, gun trafficking, credit card fraud, identity theft, money laundering and all sorts of other types of criminal activity,” he said.

District Attorney Brown concluded his remarks by stating “Queens is the most ethnically diverse county in the nation and home to an estimated 140 languages and dialects. A majority of our residents speak a language other than English. This diversity presents special challenges to us as prosecutors – and to police, the courts and victim service providers. We must address cultural and language barriers that may cause isolation, fear and resistance and keep crime victims from reaching out and seeking the assistance of law enforcement. It is therefore imperative that we have the resources needed to increase our outreach to community residents – especially in immigrant and other underserved communities – so that they are aware of the services that the criminal justice system can provide if they are victims of crime.”

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**Note to Editors: Press release e-version posted at [www.queensda.org](http://www.queensda.org).**



**District Attorney Richard A. Brown with Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum. (2/2/07)**



**District Attorney Richard A. Brown with Queens Borough President Helen Marshall and Claire Schulman, the former Queens Borough President. (2/2/07)**



**District Attorney Richard A. Brown with (Left to right) Senator Serphin Maltese, Councilman David Weprin, Assemblyman Michael Gianaris, State Senator Toby Stavisky, Borough President Helen Marshall, Councilman Peter Vallone, Jr., Councilman Mark Weprin, Claire Schulman, the former Queens Borough President, Assemblywoman Nettie Mayersohn, Assemblyman Andrew Hevesi, Councilwoman Melinda Katz, Assemblyman Ivan Lafayette, Assemblywoman Margaret Markey and Councilman Tony Avella. (2/2/07)**